

BELMONT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

March 1, 2005

Town Hall

Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Attending: Co-chairs Richard Cheek and Lydia Ogilby, Paul Bell, Lisa Harrington, Linn Hobbs, Arleyn Levee, Richard Pichette, Nancy Richards, Michael Smith, Sharon Vanderslice. Associate Member: Matthew Genta.

1 HAY ROAD

Tom Blake, the buyer of a 51,710 square-foot plot of undeveloped land on South Pleasant Street that abuts the Historic District, wants to build an access driveway to the property from 1 Hay Road, which is in the District. This driveway would be built on land purchased from the owner of 1 Hay Road and would require a cut through a historic stone wall. According to Mr. Blake, the grade from Pleasant Street is too steep to install a driveway in that location. An application for a Certificate of Non-Applicability, accompanied by plot plans, will be presented on April 6.

HISTORIC ACCESSORY STRUCTURES BYLAW

Commission members adjourned temporarily to the Board of Selectmen's Room to attend a Belmont Planning Board public hearing on this proposed bylaw. Submitted by a group of concerned citizens. Belmont resident Kit Dreier presented the bylaw and answered questions from Planning Board members. The Planning Board requested that the bylaw be reworded in several places to make it clear exactly which standards would be used to determine a building's compliance with the bylaw. Senior Planner Tim Higgins, Planning Board member Deborah Emello, Historic District Commission Co-Chair Richard Cheek, and Mrs. Dreier were asked to meet and reword the bylaw, which would then be taken up at a continued public hearing on March 29 at 7 pm.

20 CHURCH STREET

Commission members reviewed drawings for a proposed Verizon cell antenna installation on the roof of this building, which stands in the former Waverley Land Company area, an historic asset of the Commonwealth. Several members expressed concern that this installation would be in addition to the T-Mobile arrays already approved for the same roof, and others were worried about the visual prominence of a large wall on which some of the antennas would be mounted. Verizon will be asked to attend the Commission's April meeting to discuss the installation.

DEMOLITION REVIEW BYLAW

Matthew Genta reported that some minor changes needed to be made to this proposed bylaw before it was submitted to the Planning Board for a public hearing. He will meet with Senior Planner Tim Higgins to discuss.

509 PLEASANT STREET

Attending: Nushin Yazdi and Mehran Kardar, owners.

Ms. Yazdi and Mr. Kardar presented preliminary drawings for three proposed additions to this house—two small first floor bedroom additions and one partial second story addition containing a master bedroom suite and study. Commission members asked what portion of the proposed second story addition would be seen from the street, as this would affect the Commission's jurisdiction in this case. Ms. Yazdi agreed to erect a simple wooden tripod or other device on the roof to indicate the height of the proposed addition. She will contact Richard Cheek when the framing is up so that Commission members can make site visits.

The Commission's architects had the following comments on the drawings:

Matthew Genta suggested maintaining the line of the original hip roof rather than introducing a gable. This would maintain the integrity of the overhang, he said, by pulling the proposed second story back from the edge of the roof.

Michael Smith and Paul Bell said that any additions should be made on the first floor, as a second story addition is too stark of a contrast with the horizontal design of the house. Mr. Bell encouraged the owners to consider making use of the house's basement space.

504 CONCORD AVENUE

Attending: Lisa and Steve Knight, owners; Tom Huth, architect; Jean Brooks and Nicola Cavicchio, landscape architects.

Mr. Huth asked the Commission to approve a revision to the previously issued Certificate of Appropriateness for renovations to the carriage house on this property. He submitted a new elevation for the rear façade, showing that a door will be added in place of a window to allow for a second means of egress in case of fire. Michael Smith moved to accept the change. The move was seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Huth then presented floor plans and exterior elevations for a proposed renovation of the main house, which was built between 1826 and 1830 and has since been enlarged by multiple wings and ells. He provided a list of 15 architectural changes. Among these were the re-installation of a widow's walk on the roof of the main house and a balustrade

on the roof of an existing one-story addition; installation of a new front porch; installation of new six-over-six windows in the main block of the house; relocation of some eight-over-eight windows; installation of new copper gutters and downspouts, new shutters, wider cornerboards (9 ¼ inches instead of the existing 5 ½ inches), and chimney fans; installation of a new oval window; and relocation and replacement of various other windows.

Commission members praised the detailed presentation and requested the following changes: a shorter balustrade on the roof of the existing addition, wooden gutters instead of copper, and historical evidence for installation of wider corner boards and an oval window, which are not typical of the period. They also objected to the relocation of the second floor window on the north elevation of the main block of the house on the basis that in attempting to regiment windows of the house for a more balanced appearance, the architect was removing some of the quirks that give the house its distinctive character. They asked to see sections of the proposed new gutters and windows (examples of both old and new) and said that any new windows should have true divided lights. They also said that any architectural detail on the front porch should be appropriate to a house built in 1820.

Ms. Brooks and Ms. Cavicchio then presented drawings for a redesign of the landscape in front of the house. The plans called for re-grading the property in order to create a large level area in the front yard to accommodate a circular driveway. The number of steps leading down from the front door would be reduced from 19 to 12, and a seven- to nine-foot-high granite retaining wall, perhaps with a bollard fence on top, would be installed parallel to Concord Avenue. The mouth of the driveway would be widened by four feet, and an electric gate would be installed there. An existing stone pillar would be moved.

Landscape historian Arleyn Levee said that a stone retaining wall of that height would not be appropriate in this setting. Architect Matthew Genta said that the wall would compromise the root system of an old beech tree on the property and would obscure the view of the house from the street. Mr. Cheek asked Ms. Brooks and Ms. Cavicchio to return with a revised plan. Architect Paul Bell suggested that a turnaround space could be created at the top of the existing driveway, without cutting into the front yard.

20 SOMERSET STREET

Attending: Maggy Gorrill and Don Thea, owners.

The owners, who are planning to sell their property, came before the Commission in order to clarify for prospective buyers what sort of additions could be made to the house. They were informed that plans for any addition that could be seen from a public way must be reviewed by the Historic District Commission and must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's guidelines for additions to historic structures. The standards specify that any addition should be smaller than the original house, which Ms. Gorrill

said looks more like a faux cottage than a split-level. A copy of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines was provided to the owners.

Ms. Gorrill and Mr. Thea also asked whether Somerset Street was a public way. Mr. Cheek said that the lower end of Somerset was a public street as well as a scenic byway, but that he would check with the Office of Community Development to determine where the public part of Somerset Street ends and the private part begins. Mr. Cheek told the owners that a prospective buyer could call either him or Michael Smith with specific questions.

MINUTES

The Commission reviewed and approved minutes of its February meeting. The minutes of the January meeting needed some additions, however. Sharon Vanderslice will email them to all members for review.

BELMONT CITIZEN-HERALD ARTICLE

Nancy Richards distributed an article on the "Belmont Historic District Commission: Its Role and Benefits," which she planned to submit for publication in the *Belmont Citizen-Herald*. Any comments on the article should be sent to her promptly by email.

Minutes recorded by Sharon Vanderslice.